

CHAPTER - I

HISTORY OF MAYURANATHAR TEMPLE

Before analyzing the History of Mayuranathar temple it is worthwhile to understand the pre- historic period. The advent of the Paleolithic civilization in Tamil Country has observed in the region mostly the places in and around Chennai, Kanchipuram and the Northern Districts of Tamil Country. The above mentioned places have the relics of significant pre - historic society and culture, namely, Paleolithic society of Tamil Country. As appeared in the worldwide prehistoric society the relics of pre - historic society and culture appeared in Tamil Country is a pride to every citizen of India. The Research area is lack of Paleolithic utensils or resources to validate the presence of Paleolithic man in Mayiladuthurai region. Besides, nearby area namely Ariyalur is recently observed a huge relics pertaining to Micro lithic man and culture. Paleolithic age preceded Micro lithic society which flourished the existence of pre-historic remains and culture found on the banks of Cauvery delta by recent excavations conducted by archaeologists.

Here it is highly useful to understand our pride of ancient Tamil Country. In Sivaganga district at Keezhadi the archaeologists recently unearthed. In these excavations various stages they have grasped the attention of globe. Now Keezhadi has become a talk of the town universally by all. The archaeological relic's hints back to the rich Tamil Civilizations and the urban settlement of the Sangam epoch. The findings certainly enhance a sense of pride to the Tamils. After a few years time like Keezhadi Mayiladuthurai region may become a matter of pride for many Tamils. The findings helped gain more momentum. Excavations have been happening in places like Kodumanal, Adichanallur, Porunthal, etc. Therefore, the archaeological survey is badly in need of to trace the existence of Pre- historic society in the study area Mayiladuthurai region. Dharmapuri, Salem, Vellore and Thiruvannamalai districts, the

Northern districts of Tamil Country was restrained to a Neolithic culture in Tamil Country which is also experiential by the recent researchers. Furthermore, in the Villupuram district several Neolithic tools have been discovered recently. The findings of the Neolithic society disclosing the fact that the Neolithic man and the existence on the hillocks of Villupuram and Cuddalore districts. Recently, a teacher has recovered two Neolithic tools from the Sembiyan Kandiur village near Mayiladuthurai.¹

At this juncture it is also interesting to know the Neolithic age. One can find the Neolithic scratch marks that look like graffiti. Some scholars suggest that it is an Indian script that Murugu reads in the Tamil language. It is very difficult to determine that the Mayiladuthurai region was inhabited by Neolithic people in light of earlier lost finds and the influence of the Indus script on the Neolithic tool. However, based on these findings, the State Department of Archeology conducted excavations there, and they give a clue that these tools had been used by the megalithic people of the Iron Age culture. The same type of Neolithic Celtic has been discovered along with potteries from the Iron Age culture or the megalithic period at Kambarmedu in excavations near Mayiladuthurai. Lost finds of basalt stone tools in this region suggest that use prevailed during the Iron Age or Megalithic period rather than the Neolithic period. The Neolithic people established their life in the mountainous area rather than in the fertile plain of India. These tools during the Iron Age were used for agriculture and continued by later Iron Age people and are still used by common people as a village deity in some regions of the Tamil Country.

Here it is worthwhile to understand our pride particularly the temples of Tamil Society. Coromandel Coastal region is scattered with thousands of temples. All temples in Tamil Country are reflecting our ancient Tamil tradition. Besides, some temples appear too old and some of them are ruined in condition. A number of small hamlets and towns of Tamil Country have a minimum four or more temples apart from the famous temples of Tamil Country namely, Thanjavur, Chidambaram, Srirangam,

Rameswaram, Madurai, Srivilliputhur, Kanchipuram and so on. Most of the noteworthy temples of ancient and celebrated that these temples and nearby have become places of pilgrimage and tourism including Mayiladuthurai region.

The mainstream of the prevailing important temples are reflecting legacy and pride of Tamil culture. The huge constructions demonstrate Tamils innovative, creative and superiority. The monuments are measured as antiquity remains of the Tamils and dates back from 7th Century to the 15th Century. The antiquity of the temple reflects imaginative superiority of the Tamils and it surmise the fact that these monuments have passed on very long growth and development. These monuments stood as recommendations to the history of Tamils and annals of art and architecture.

The architectural motifs, structural engineering building skills of the Tamils, and craftsmanship excellence appear in these temples. Apart from this more particularly temple outer walls, walls of the sanctum sanctorum, artistic pillars, portrait and bas relief sculptures, ceilings of the *Mandapas*, outer *Gopuras* and *Thiruchutrumaligai* also expressed artistic excellence of the Tamils while visiting these huge temples.

One can amaze in front of the superstructure which demonstrates excellence of the Tamils and it demonstrates the human excellence. The craftsmen have bestowed on their architectural expertise, and the patronage of the Tamil rulers made it possible. The temple became an aesthetic formulation of an essentially theistic religion. Through these temples, Tamils sought to make all that their beliefs symbolized accessible to their sensory perception. In fact, these beliefs influenced and dominated people in the privacy of their conscience. The visible emblem of religion, the philosophy and ethics of the Tamils who entered the temple played vigorous role than any other institution. Temple became a symbol of "Dharma" for all rulers, officials and common men alike. Facilitating its construction and maintenance of these temples became an act of merit of the Tamils.

The great builders and artists sought self-expression through conformity with tradition rather than originality of expression. The elegance and beauty of the Mamallapuram rock cut architectural temples of Mahabalipuram, the majestic grandeur of the Thanjavur Vimana and the Madurai outer Gopuras or the rich and exquisite carvings of the Belur and Halebid temples reflect exclusive designed, innovative and creative structures and sculptures in a detailed manner. They did not conceive of art as secular and religious. All art is one, basically religious and symbolic. Religion is, in fact, synonymous with civilized existence.

The architecture of the temple only conveyed in spatial terms the intensity of their yearning for "Human Excellence." The deity to which the structure was dedicated symbolized the Supreme Principle that controlled the affairs of the world and gave direction to the spiritual impulse. The temple became the center of all human activity, civic and social life. Its structure dominated the environment, both for its location and its size. Its solidity and mass gave a sense of permanence to all the other institutions whose main function, such as the temple, was the preservation of traditional values. Every town and hamlet grew up around the temple, which was the center of all activities. Its influence extended beyond the purely religious and spiritual realms and made the temple an important factor in the town's economy.

The deity was a major landowner, thanks to frequent endowments by the rulers, administrative officials, rich citizens and common layman. The temple also acted and helped as banks, lending money to needy farmers and feeding the common men. Building a temple usually took many years and employed hundreds of craftsmen and temple building engineers. The best craftsmen from the neighboring provinces found patronage, and during its construction they trained a whole generation of talented sculptors and temple builders. The daily routine of rituals in the temples gave secure employment to a large number of priests and common mass.

The Brahmanas learned from the Vedas, musicians, dancers, teachers, florists, tailors, clerks and accountants, and officials of various kinds. Number of existing epigraphic records supply considerable detail the budgetary provisions for the stipulated rites and rituals to be observed in the temples. A temple daily pujas and annual festivals were giving several occasions of great social gathering and people gathered from the surrounding towns and villages to participate in the general merriment. These festivals ended up being fairs, often lasting two or more days. Traders and Trade Guilds from far and near places went there to exchange or sell goods.

The age of the temples was essentially an age of faith. Scholastic learning was considered the highest intellectual pursuit and the standards set for the evaluation of individual achievement were very high. Debates and speeches were held in the temple premises among scholars seeking recognition and renown. These provided an important forum for the scrutiny of various creeds and philosophical schools. The temple precincts were often the only place for public entertainment. Wrestling matches and music and dance recitals enlivened the special occasions of the temple ceremony. Both the rich and the poor benefited from these entertainments.

During the temple festivities, travelers were given free room and board in the rest houses or *choultries* attached to the temple. Next to the temples were schools or "*padasalas*" where students learned everything from the three rupees to theology, philosophy and ethics. Hospitals were often located on the temple premises. The local assembly or *Panchayat* met there to discuss municipal affairs or resolve personal disputes. The very conduct of elections or the hearing of civil disputes in the presence of the deity reversed the process with an atmosphere of solemnity.

The typical South Indian temple, as we see it in its architectural complete form, is the product of centuries of growth and evolution. It is a complex of structures, some

of which had functional utility while others had no more than architectural and ornamental value. The various structures that make up the temple were added to the main sanctuary in stages, often unsystematically and with little architectural effect. They met the necessities of an elaborate ritual that became even greater on festive occasions so far.

The evolution of temple architecture from its inception from simple to massive has unassuming beginnings. As a shrine of worship the temples of Tamil Country stood as an agglomeration of structures conforming to the increasing emotional demands of devotees. The completely evolved architectural form with its *Cella* (*Garbhagriha*), vestibule (*Antarala*), the corridors with pillars (*Mandapam*), the tower above the *Cella* (*Sikhara*), the cloisters or the rectangular range of cells, the imposing *Gopurams* or towers in the doors, the myriad niches, niches and niches, are all developments that were beyond the conception of those who designed the first temples. In the southern and southeastern parts, consisting mainly of the Tamil-speaking districts and parts of Andhra Pradesh, a different style of temple building developed which is commonly called the Dravida or Dravidian style of temple architecture. To this belong the well-known temples of Thanjavur, Madurai, Srirangam, Chidambaram, Ramesvaram including Mayiladuthurai region temples etc.

The multiple concentric enclosures, imposing towers and ornate "thousand-pillar rooms", these temples are the product of a long evolution over a thousand years. The oldest of the surviving temples stood from around 600 C.E. For illustration the Mamallapuram group of temples (46 miles south of Madras) built by the rulers of Pallava monarchs. These scooped out and stone-built structures not the crude efforts of craftsmen still struggling to understand the purpose and principles of architecture. The work of fairly advanced school of builders conformed to long-established practices time for tradition. Obviously, the Mamallapuram group of temples had their architecture for bears, which have not been able to survive the ravages of time. This

could be due to the perishable nature of the materials from which they were built. Therefore, there is a large gap in our knowledge of Dravidian temples before the 7th century.

Sangam period

Here it is interesting to know the region under the Sangam age. The archaeological terminology of the Iron Age and the Sangam Age was more or less parallel to each other. Therefore, during this period people began to settle in a permanent area and people like the Iron Age culture practiced many funeral customs for the dead. This region witnessed the custom of burials that is perceived in the flat region, especially in the coastal region. No stone burial has been reported in this region, i.e. dolmen, stone circle, menhir, Cairn circle, Cairn bundle, Cist burial, and Dolmenoid cists. Sangam literature refers extensively to this region while mentioning the Sangam Cholas seaport. The famous Kaveripumpattinam or Pumbuhar, the celebrated port city and the secondary capital of the first Cholas of the Sangam period, now an insignificant fishing village, is located on the eastern coast, where the Cauvery River meets the sea that is now in the Mayiladuthurai region. Tamil classics of the Sangam period and post-Sangam literature have vividly praised the city as *pattinam* with various neighborhoods from various communities. Pattinappalai, one of the ten idylls of the 2nd century AD, gives a detailed description of the maritime trade and the goods that were imported and exported through this port.

It is evident that the five physiographic divisions (Tinais) during the Sangam period reflected the distinctive modes of behavior of the respective division in those days. It affects the political, social and economic conditions of the people. Therefore, this region also came under the concept of *tinai*. The Mayiladuthurai region in general came under the division of Marutham.² The region is a fertile low plain where rice fields abound. The contiguous area to the east of Mayiladuthurai is the Neydal region,

that is, the coastal or littoral stretch that runs along the coast. In addition to these important physiographic divisions, the entire Tamil country was divided into twelve *nadus*. The regions between Villupuram and Pudukkottai were divided into Punal Nadu, Pandya Nadu, and Aravindu Nadu. They include the actual Thanjavur and Nagapattinam as well.

Furthermore, the region under study was generally known as Chola Nadu or Chola Mandalam, which bordered the Vellaru River in the north and south, the Bay of Bengal in the east, and Kottaikkarai in the west.³ Many Sangam Age places were located in this region. Kaveripumpattinam served as the secondary capital of the Uraiyur Cholas. In this city a permanent administration of the Chola rule was established. It continued as the port city of the Cholas until the 7th century AD.

The twin epics Silappadigaram and Manimegalai of the 5th and 6th centuries CE tell the stories related to this region; focusing mainly on the town of Pampuhar. Therefore, the Mayiladuthurai region and its surroundings played an important role during the Post-Sangam period, before the arrival of the Pallavas to the Tamil country. Excavations carried out by both the Archaeological Survey of India and the State Archeology Department at Kaveripumpattinam and other related sites such as Sayavanam, Kilapperumpallam, Melaiyur, Kilaiyur and Vellaiyan Iruppu are located very close to the Mayiladuthurai region. Excavations reveal the antiquity of this region from the Sangam age to the end of the 6th century AD. Since this region is very close to the port city of Kaveripumpattinam, goods from various places in South India were transported through this inland region while being imported and exported both by road and the Cauvery River. Through this region, the Cauvery River passes and confluence near Kaveripumpattinam and small ships (ferries) regularly transported goods from land or from foreign countries. This was attested by the discovery of a pier at Kilaiyur in excavations. Therefore, the Mayiladuthurai region functioned as the main center of the port city of Kaveripumpattinam during the Sangam and subsequent periods.

Although the name Mayiladuthurai denotes the famous place for the city of the peacock, that is, the city of the peacock, the suffix *turai* gives a clue that the city probably functioned as a landing stage for small boats to load and unload the goods at the port. Kambar's celebrated birthplace, Kambarmedu, is located at Therazhundur, which was excavated by archaeological survey of India. This city, during the Sangam period, functioned as an important city of the Velir rulers. The Velir princes of Azhundur married the Chola King of the Sangam Era Uruvapharer Ilanjecenni of Uraiyur.⁴

Karikala Chola, the son and successor of Ilanjecenni defeated his enemies, the Cheras, the Pandyas and the feudatories. The people of Azhundur held a festival of grants in right of this great victory of King Karikala in their city. The city also served as the secondary capital of the Cholas of the Sangam Age. The other places in this region are Muvalur and Sittarkadu. These two cities were associated with the great poet Kambar and his son. Three inscriptions are found in Muvalur and Sittarkadu explains that these two cities were ruled by a chieftain named Sadaiyan de Pudukkottai.⁵ Bhuttadatta offers a detailed description of Kaveripattinam in her Abidhammava Tara. Therefore, it shows that during the interregnum of Kalabhras; this area became famous for the flourishing of Buddhism. Achutavikkanta, one of the kings of Kalabhra, ruled this area and made Kaveripumpattinam his capital.⁶

The region under the Pallavas

Here it is worthwhile to know the region under the Pallava age. The Pallavas who came from Andhra Pradesh as chiefs of Ikshavagus and occupied the Tondaimandalam region made Kanchipuram their capital around the 5th century AD. They rose to power gradually, crossed the Cauvery River and ruled as far as the Pudukkottai region in the Tamil country. However, not a single inscription of the Pallava rulers was found in this area to confirm the above fact. Tondaimandalam and

the early Pallavas had chosen living rocks as the means of excavating rock-cut temples, and stone temple construction was comparatively rare. We do not have any structural temple in this flat area. This is probably the cause of the absence of inscriptions in the Mayiladuthurai region.

In general, the area between Venkatam and the Pudukkottai region was under the direct control of the Pallavas until the 9th century AD. Thus, it is believed that the region under study was also included in its control. The Saiva canons i.e. the *Devaram* of the 7th century CE attest to the presence of the temples of this region frequently in a vivid manner. *Devaram* hummers praised many temples in this region. From these poems it is evident that this region was the flourishing center of Saivism. The Mayuranathar temple at Mayiladuthurai was sung by four Nayanmars, namely Sundarar, Thirugnana Samandar, Thirunavukarasar and Manikkavasagar.

Appar praised the Lord of the city in one Pathigam, and the Holy Sambandar dedicated two Pathigam. Saint Sambandar was invited by the Brahmins of the city of Mayiladuthurai, and during his time the Brahmin community was predominant in the city.⁷ Sambandar describes the beauty of the Cauvery River and the pleasant setting of the town on the Cauvery River. In this beautiful town of Mayiladuthurai, all living things, especially monkeys, buzzing bees, fish in ponds and rivers, and peacocks enjoyed the nature of the city. After seeing the beauty of the town, the peacock danced. Hence, the name of the city was born as Mayiladuthurai; the city of Thirumangai Alvar speaks of the fame of the Parimala Renganatha Perumal temple in Thiruvindalur on the north side of Mayiladuthurai.⁸

The presiding deity is a swayambhu lingam or a self-manifested lingam, the symbol of the Hindu God Siva. Siva's consort is known by the names Abhayapradhambikai, Abhayambikai, Anjalanayaki and Anjalai. There are three

smaller shrines to the Hindu God Ganesha and another to Shiva as Nataraja or "Lord of Dance".

The region under the Cholas

Vijayalaya Chola (850-871 C.E)

Here it is highly useful to know the region under the Chola period. The Imperial Cholas established their power under the Vijayalaya Chola (850-871 CE) around 850 CE. Vijayalaya Chola made his capital in Thanjavur and built a temple for Nisumpasudani in his capital city. Although we do not find any inscription evidence of this King in this region, after the decline of the Pallavas, the entire region from Villupuram to Pudukkottai came under Vijayalaya control. He ruled until 870 CE.⁹ No inscription of his period is available at Mayuranathar temple.

Aditya I Chola (871-907 C.E)

Vijayalaya Chola was succeeded by his son Aditya I Chola. He came to and ascended the Chola throne in 870 CE. We do not come across any records of Aditya I Chola in this temple.

Parantaka I Chola (907-955 C.E)

Parantakachola, son of Adityachola I, ascended the throne in the year 907 CE. He had the title 'Maduraiyum Ilamum Konda Kopparakesari'.¹⁰ He occupied the Pandya country and went up to Srilanka. He was a great warrior. However, information is not available to state the range of religious amenities rendered by Parantaka I Chola to this temple.

Uttama Chola (970-985 C.E)

Uttama Chola, son of Sembiyanmahadevi and Gandaraditya, ruled the Chola country during the years 969 or 970 and 985 CE. There are almost fifteen inscriptions from the Uttama Chola period on this king dated 969 AD.¹¹ reported from the place

where Thiruvilakkudi refers to the remission of taxes on some parcels of land belonging to the Thiruvelvikkudi temple bought by the Videlvudugu sabha. Devichaturvedimangalam, a brahmadeya in Korukkai nadu on the north bank of the Cauvery River for the 50 Ilakasu money that was received by an individual from the regiment known as Karikalachola-terinja-kaikkolar.¹² This regiment was named in honor of Aditya Karikala (956-969 CE). There is no inscription from the Uttama Chola period available at the Mayuranathar temple.

Rajaraja I Chola (985-1014 CE)

After the death of Uttama Chola Arumolivarman, who was the greatest ruler of Chola, he assumed the royal title of Rajaraja I Chola, ascended the throne and ruled for about 29 years. He was the talented son of Sundara Chola and Vanavan Mahadevi. His reign was splendid as the formative period of Chola imperialism. There are almost nineteen inscriptions of this king that have been reported in various places in the Mayiladuthurai region. Rajaraja I Chola ascended the throne in 985 AD. Nevertheless, No information is available to state the religious endowments extracted by Rajaraja I Chola to this Mayuranathar temple.

Rajendra I Chola (1012-1044 C.E)

Rajendra I Chola, son and successor of Rajaraja I Chola, came to power in AD 1012. He was a great warrior. Rajendra I Chola achieved unique success as a worthy son of a worthy father.¹³ His original name was Madhurantaka. In 1012 AD he became crown prince and was known by the titular name of Rajendra. However, information is not available to state the extent of religious services rendered by Rajendra I Chola to this temple.

Rajadhiraja I Chola (1018-1054 C. E)

Rajendra I Chola was succeeded by his son Rajadhiraja I Chola, who ascended the throne in 1018 CE. He served under Rajendra I Chola as co-ruler for over twenty-

five years.¹⁴ Rajadhiraja I Chola is known to have adopted the name Virarajendradeva. It is said that Rajakesarivarman Vijayarajendradeva of Konerirajapuram took the head of the Pandya and captured the Salai from the Chola King of Lanka (Ceylon) of Rattapadi seven and a half fous (country) and the performance of the anointing of heroes in Kalyanapura, must be referred to Rajakesarivarman Rajadhiraja I. It also comes from Konerirajapuram and refers to the Rajakesari Rajadhiraja region that took the head of Vira-Pandya and captured the Salai from King Chera and Lanka (Ceylon). The gift of a lamp was then donated to a Vaishnava temple in the same location.¹⁵ No inscription of his period is available at Mayuranathar temple.

Rajendra II Chola (1051-1063 CE)

Rajendra II Chola, a younger brother of Rajadhiraja I Chola, ascended to the throne in 1051 CE and his inscriptions in this region appear in Thiruvavaduthurai, Thiruvilakkudi, Kuttalam, Konerirajapuram, Thirukolambiyur, etc. His inscriptions with the introduction "Irattapadi Elarai Ilakkamum", ¹⁶ "Tirumaruviya Sengol", ¹⁷ "Tirumadar Puvienum", ¹⁸ "Tirumaruviya Senkol Vendar" .¹⁹ He seems to have assumed the title of "Parakesari".²⁰ No inscription of his period is available at Mayuranathar temple.

Virarajendra Chola (1063-1070 CE)

Virarajendra Chola, the younger brother of Rajendra II Chola, ascended the throne in 1063 CE. Its inscription contains the historical introduction that begins with the words "Virame tunaiyaga".²¹ However, information is not available to state the extent of religious services rendered by Virarajendra Chola to this temple.

Adhirajendra Chola (1070 C.E)

Virarajendra Chola died in early 1070 CE in the eighth year of his reign. The Vijayalaya Chola line came to an end with the death of Adhirajendra Chola (1063-1070

CE). The accession of Kulottunga I Chola heralded the Chalukya Chola dynasty. We do not come across any records of Adhirajendra Chola in this temple.

Kulottunga I Chola (1070-1120 CE)

Adhirajendra Chola ruled for a short period and was succeeded by Kulottunga I Chola in 1070 CE. The accession of Kulottunga I Chola is an important fact in the history of the Cholas insofar as it gave some remedy to the Chola Empire for more than a century. It enjoyed a long term as the empire of the Tamil country for more than fifty years and is credited with a large number of headings from this region. The inscriptions of Kulottunga I Chola begin with the historical introduction (Meykeerthi) "Pugal Sulnda Punnari", ²² There are only one inscription found of his period is available at Mayuranathar temple.

An unknown damaged and fragmentary inscription found on a stone slab built into the floor in front of the central shrine in the Mayuranathasvami temple which is in characters of about issued in the 11th century A.D. registers a gift of land to the temple. The land donation was an annual yield of 300 *kalam* of paddy and with exemption from taxes. The epigraph clearly attested the land endowments and exemption from taxes. From this it is surmise that during last quarter of the 11th Century C.E. glorifies the reign of Kulottunga I Chola. The accession of Kulottunga I Chola marks the commencement of a new era in the history of Chola Empire including Temple architecture. It is attested by the statement that Kulottunga I Chola ensured for his subjects a century of peace, development various temples and conversion of ancient temple to structural temple. Therefore, the earliest inscription of the temple by its characters of about issued in the 11th Century C.E. reveals that the Mayuranathaswamy temple might have been changed into stone structure during the reign of Kulottunga I Chola.²³

Vikrama Chola (1118-1135 C.E)

Vikrama Chola ascended the throne in 1118 CE. He ruled with his father Kulottunga I Chola for some time as co-ruler. We do not come across any records of Vikrama Chola in this temple.

Kulottunga II Chola (1133-1150 C. E)

He was chosen heir apparent by his father Vikrama Chola in 1133 C.E. and when his father died two years later, he became an independent ruler.²⁴ However, information is not available to state the extent of religious services rendered by Kulottunga II Chola to this temple.

Rajaraja II Chola (1146-1163 C.E)

Rajaraja II Chola was the son of Kulottunga II Chola and ascended to the throne in 1146 C.E. During his time, the Chola Empire faced many troubles. The Hoysala gradually tried to establish their power in the Tamil country. The western Chalukyas also wanted to extend their power south. Therefore, the administrative system of the Cholas of Rajaraja II Chola showed signs of weakening at the central level. No inscription of his period is available at Mayuranathar temple.

Rajadhiraja II Chola (1163-1178 CE)

Rajadhiraja II Chola, a grandson of Vikrama Chola, by the son of Neriudai-Perumal, was succeeded by Rajaraja II Chola. Rajadhiraja II prasasti begins with "Kadal-Sulnda Par-madarum", ²⁵ "Poomaruviya Tirumadhu", ²⁶ "Kadalsulnda Parelum", ²⁷ and "Poomaruviya Tisaimukathon". ²⁸ We do not come across any records of Rajadhiraja II Chola in this temple.

Kulottunga III Chola (1178-1218 CE)

Rajadhiraja II Chola ruled until 1178 CE. He was succeeded by his son Kulottungachola III. His prasasti begins with "Puyalvayttu manvalara". The record of

Tribhuvanachakravartin Solakeraladeva who took Madurai, Karuvur, Ilam and the crowned head of Pandya must be attributed to Kulotungachola III about the identity of the conquests claimed for him.²⁹ The King had another title called Tribhuvanaviradeva.³⁰ Many inscriptions from the Mayiladuthurai region refer to this king's name as Puyalvayttu manvalara'.³¹ There are ten inscriptions of Kulottuga III Chola issued in his 19, 25, 31, 33 and 39th regnal years in this temple.

The earliest inscription of Kulottunga III Chola issued in his 19th regnal year 1195-96 C.E., found on the south wall of *mahamandapa* in front of the Panchanadesvara shrine makes mention the historical introduction *Tribhuvanachakravarti Maduraiyum Eezhamum konu Pandiyan Mudithalaiyunk Kondarulina Sri Kulottunga Chola Devarku* who is identified with Kulottunga III Chola. The record refers to the gift of land at Kulottungasolanallur and made tax free to the temple. The land grant issued by one *Tirumandira-olai* Rajanarayana-Muvendavelan. From this it is clear that the land gifts at Kulottungasolanallur was made by one revenue official, *Tirumandira-olai* of this region. Besides the revenue official through the land endowments rendered spiritual service and extended their patronization to Mayuranathar temple at Mayiladuthurai. In addition to this the Mayuranathar temple might have been changed into stone structure during the time of Kulottunga III Chola last decade of the 12th Century.³²

The Second mutilated inscription of Kulottunga III Chola issued in his 300th day of the 19th regnal year 1198 C.E. found on the same wall in the Panchanadesvara temple registers gift of land. The land gift was made and their yield in paddy the food grains and makes mention *ulvari* tax to the primal god of the temple. The official order of the King was made by the Puravuvvari officer of the Chola administration. The revenue officer Puravuvvari officials entitle to fix the revenue for the land endowments and entrusted to collect the *ulvari* a land tax during the medieval age. Further the revenue officials of Kurralamudaiyan and Tiruchchirambalamudaiyar have undertaking

to pay themselves the revenue taxes dues on the endowed land to this temple. From this it is infer that the revenue officials were promoted the local temples and diverted the state wealth for the development of spiritual services to the main deity of Mayuranathaswamy temple. The same record also mentions land endowments and kinds of lands both tax paying lands and tax-free lands. The above mention tax paying lands and tax-free lands were granted to the temple in the 21st regnal year of Kulottunga I Chola were abolished the tolls and of those endowed land by one Kurralamudaiyan and Tiruchchirambalamudaiyar. The two revenue officials namely Kurralamudaiyan and Tiruchchirambalamudaiyar who were said to have rebuilt/renovated and enlarged the temple of Tiruvaiyarudaiyar, Mayiladuthurai. Further the record also explains the enlargement of the temple with its courtyard, surrounding streets flower-garden called Virarakkadan-tirunandavanam and a mutt called Vikkirasolan-madam in Tamil.

Besides, the epigraph also makes mention the principal deity Mayuranathaswamy as Thiruvaiyarudaiyar one more name of the primal deity. From this it is clear that the central shrine was enlarged with its courtyard, surrounding streets flower-garden called Virarakkadan-tirunandavanam and a *matha* called Vikkirasolan-madam during the 21st regnal year corresponding to 1198 C.E. of Kulottunga III Chola of the twelfth century C.E.³³

The Third inscription of Kulottunga III Chola issued in his 19th regnal year 1198 A.D. found on the same wall in the Panchanadesvara temple registers the land grants and its *ulvari*, the cultivation tax for the consecration of the principal deity Tiruvaiyarudaiyar at Kulottungacholanallur alias Kulottungacholan Kurralam (Mayuram) in Tiruvalundur Nadu. The expression *Thirupirathidai* is clearly mention that the temple might have been once again installed the principal image and the word *Thiruppani* refers to the renovation of the temple and the principal image Tiruvaiyarudaiyar. This installation of the Principal deity and renovation of the temple

were took place the during the time of Kulottunga III Chola. Kulottunga III Chola was an ardent follower of Siva and showed important to temple renovation and consecration of idols in this temple. Therefore Mayuranathaswamy temple might have been renovated and the installation of the main deity during the time of Kulottunga III Chola conducted by the donor of a resident of Kurralam in Pattina Kurram a territorial division of Geyamanikka Valanadu the neighbouring administrative division.

The revenue of gift of lands and its *ulvari* of the lands were given for the worship and spiritual services to the primal God Tiruvaiyarudaiyar. The record also mentions the donor one Ishabhadevan Tiruchchirrambalam Udaiyar Karunai Vizhupparaiyar of a resident of Kurralam in Pattina Kurram the major territorial division of Geyamanikka Valanadu. From this it is clear the name Ishabhadevan Tiruchchirrambalam Udaiyar Karunai Vizhupparaiyar perhaps might have been a revenue official of the Cholas. The record also mentions that the temple centered around Kulottungacholanallur alias Kulottungacholan Kurralam (Mayuram) in Tiruvalundur Nadu the administrative division of Pattina Kurram of Geyamanikka Valanadu. From this it is clear that this epigraph clearly gives the administrative divisions and sub divisions in which the temple was located and its shows the Cholas revenue administration revenue territorial divisions in a systematic manner. The epigraph also mentions several officials who were involved in the land grants, Devadana *iraiyili*, *Tirunamattukani* and tax exemption namely, *puravuvvari* Thinaikkalanayakam of Palayur Puravuvvari Sri Karnanayagam of Perunallurudaiyan, Puravuvvari Sri Karnanayagam of Pandhanainallurudaiyan, Puravuvvari Sri Karnanayagam of Kuzhalurudaiyan, Puravuvvari Sri Karnanattu Mugavetti of Perumangalaudaiyan, Puravuvvari Sri Karnanayagam of Uzhandhaiudaiyan, Venattaraiyan, Sambetraraiyan, Katchiyarayan, Vannattudaiyan, Kanagarayan, Pazhanthirayan and Cholakon.

The record attested the hierarchy of revenue administration of the Cholas. The Cholas was credited with a systematic Government. The empire was divided into Mandala, Valanadu and Nadu. The lowest unit was the village. Though the villages enjoyed autonomy, the Central Government controlled the villages assemblies through the system of audit. An accurate survey of lands conducted in 1001 C.E. recorded the land rights in Government records. Senapathi Kuravan Ulagalandan was the revenue officer who carried out the revenue survey. Uttarangudaiyan Kon Vidividangan alias Villavan Muvendavelan was one of the top officers of Rajaraja. Madurantaka Gandaradityan was an important official in the department of temple affairs. The Samantha chief Vallavarayan Vandiyadevan was the husband of his sister of Kundavai.³⁴

An inscription of begins with historical introduction (prasasti) Tribuvanachakravarti Maduraiyum Eezhamum kondu Pandiyan Mudithalaiyunk Kondarulina Sri Kulottunga Chola Devarku who is identified with Kulottunga III Chola issued in his 25th regnal year 1201-1202 C.E. found on the same wall of the Panchanadesvara temple. This fourth inscription of Kulottunga III Chola registers a gift of a hundred kalam of paddy from tax free land per year as *irai* for the sabhaviniyogam of the mahasabha of Rajendra Chaturvedimangalam. The gift of hundred kalam paddy for entrusted to Chandraditavar the special priest who conducted spiritual services and rituals to the Adi Chandeswaradevar deity of this temple. It shows that donors like Vellalas not only endowed for the spiritual services of main deity but also other sub-shrine including Adi Chandeswarar who is none other than Chandikeswarar and its sub-shrines.

The record also makes mention gift of a hundred kalam of paddy from tax free land as *irai* for annual subscription by one Mangalankilan Andukondan Amudalvan a vellala landlord of this region made annual due for the sabhaviniyogam of the mahasabha of Rajendra Chaturvedimangalam. From this it is clear that Mangalankilan

Andukondan Amudalvan of nearby Rajendra Chaturvedimangalam a rich Vellala made rich endowment for the mahasabha who carried out the local self-Government activities of Rajendra-chaturvedimangalam in northern banks of the river Cauvery. More over this lithic record portrays the measurements of 100 kalam of paddy which is collected as annual tax due for the mahasabha of Rajendra Chaturvedimangalam. Therefore, the fertile land nearby the region yielded a huge income source to the Mayuranathaswamy temple. Further the fertile lands situated on the southern and northern banks of the river Cauvery were irrigated by the river. Thus the local revenue administrative system stood as one among the pillars of Chola imperialism. The epigraph also mentions the primal deity as Kulottunga Cholan Kutralatthudaiyar and the temple as Thiruvaiyatrudiayar Koil.³⁵

An inscription of begins with historical introduction (prasasti) Tribuvanachakravarti Maduraiyum Eezhamum kondu Pandiyan Mudithalaiyunk Kondarulina Sri Kulottunga Chola Devarku who is identified with Kulottunga III Chola issued in his 25th regnal year 1201-02 A.D. found on the east wall of the same Mandapa in the Panchanadesvara temple registers an endowment of lands in two pieces of land measuring 7 and half ma.

The fifth inscription of Kulottunga-Chola III gift of two pieces of land measuring 7 and half ma by one Brahmana and another Vellala landowners respectively of Sivapadasekhara-chaturvedimangalam to the temple of Tiruvaiyarudaiyar. The record also refers that the above mentions land enough to provide 60 kalam of paddy per year free of any taxes to the main deity of this temple. The record also refers to Chandraditavar, the special priests who agreed to conduct the spiritual services without fail. This record also mentions that this measurements of paddy is said to have been originally measured by the temple Sonnavararivar, a special official who collected the food grains from the donors. This measurement of paddy already given as *devadana* now transferred to the main deity for spiritual services of this temple. Further the

expression Brahmanas and Vellalas irrespective of their communal groups who were land owning communal groups of the region made endowments for the development of the temple. The special official Sonnavararivar who may be served as Chief of the treasury of the temple. Thus the temple possess a huge treasury and acted as economic centre the nearby hamlets. The temple served as a centre of economic activity of medieval period in Tamil Country. The donors undertook to pay the irai from their own lands by themselves and also not to collect the antarayam may be land tenure which seems to have been due from such tax-free lands. The record registers a royal gift of village as Devadana-iraiyili (tax free land) for worshipping and special offerings during the Kulottunga III Chola.³⁶

The sixth inscription of Kulottunga-Chola III issued in his 25th regnal year 1203 A. D found on the same mandapa in the Panchanadesvara temple registers a land purchase agreement by the mahasabha of the temple. The Mahasabha forwarding as urkil-iraiyili, the antarayam tax of half a *veli* of land, which is said to have been purchased by the temple from one Kasyapan Narasingan Tirupperambalanambi of Villiyanallur in Tiruvindalur Nadu. From this it is clear that the temple might have been acted as record keeping centre of the nearby region. The Purchase of land and land purchase agreement of the mahasabha was engraved on the walls of the temples. The land owner Kasyapan Narasingan Tirupperambalanambi of Villiyanallur in Tiruvindalur Nadu who sold the land perhaps a rich landowning communal group of the medieval society. The record also mention certain signatories of the land purchase as witnessed of the deed namely Pariyalur Kizhavan Uttamapriyan of Urkanakku Nalurudaiyan, Kaasiban Narayan Thiruperumbalan, Kavuniyanbhattan of Sivadevabhattan, Narayanabhattan, Sivakalyananambi, Sarvedeva Chitrumbalanambi, Kaasiyanputra Devabhattan, Naniyan Thiruvengkadubhattan, Kavuniyan Namban, Kodan Namban and Vikramachola Bhattan. The record makes mention the principal deity as Adi Chandeswara Devar. From this it is clear that the

primal deity was popular in the name of Adi Chandeswara Devar during the medieval age.³⁷

The seventh damaged inscription of Kulottunga III Chola issued in his 31st regnal year 1209 A.D. found on the north wall of the mandapa in the Panchanadesvara temple registers an *ulvari*, tax free land gift which was situated in Virarajendra Chaturvedimangalam. This land grant was made to conduct the daily pujas of the main deity and sub-shrines of the temple. This land grant was enough to meet out the requirements of daily spiritual services and worship. The land gift was made with *ulvari* the Cultivation production tax. The record also mentions the names of the signatories at the end of the epigraph. The tax free land was witnessed by the signatories of the deed administrative officials of Kulottunga III Chola. From this it is clear that the income source and maintenance of temple wealth lands, the immovable properties were taken care by the administrative officials of the Chieftains. The land deeds and signatories like administrative officials of the Cholas show that the temple might have been existed as record office.³⁸

The eighth inscription of Tribhuvanaviradeva who is identified with Kulottunga III Chola issued in his 33rd regnal year 1211 A.D. found on the east wall of the same mandapa in the Panchanadesvara temple refers to a gift of 3 and half land (*veli*) which belonged to the sabha of Nallur Pudukkudi, to the temple of Tiruvaiyarudaiyar as tirunamattukkani and also urkil-iraiyili made it tax free gift. The epigraph mentions the main deity as Kulottunga Cholan Kutralathudaiyar, Thiruvaiyarudaiyar and Adi Chandeswara Devar. Further the inscription mentions in addition to the land, the trees and the well was also entrusted to the Chandraditavar the special priest to conduct special ritual without fail. This sale deed was inscribed both in stone and copper plates. The record also mention certain signatories of the land purchase as witnessed of the deed namely Nallur Pudhukudi Mahavishnu, Urkanakku Pudhudaian, Narayana Nambi, Palasiriyar, Uttama Chola Brahma, Nigarili Chola Brahmarayan, Somathiya

Aaludaiyan Kaadan, and Anadhakoothan. The record also mentions the names of the signatories at the end of the epigraph. The tax free land was witnessed by the signatories of the deed administrative officials of Kulottunga III Chola. From this it is clear that the income source and maintenance of temple wealth lands, the immovable properties were taken care by the administrative officials of the Chieftains. The land deeds and signatories like administrative officials of the Cholas show that the temple might have been existed as record office.³⁹

The ninth damaged and mutilated inscription of Tribhuvanaviradeva who is identified with Kulottunga Chola III issued in his 39th regnal year 1215-16 A.D. found on the north wall of the mandapa in the Airavatesvara temple refers to an endowment of land by one Tirunattapperuman a resident of Anaichchul in Tiraimur Nadu. The record mentions the territorial divisions namely Uyyakkondar Valanadu for the requirements of worship, both daily and special, to god Tiruvenkadudaiyar consecrated by the donor in the western portion of the first p00rakara in the temple of Tiruvidaikkulam- udaiyar at the place. This seems to have been supplementary to two veli of land at Danavinodanallur existing to the main temple in the 25th year of the king by Arayan Edirilissolar alias Soliyavaraiyar of Palaivayal under the name Soliyavaraiyar- kudikkadu and complemented by the latter with another gift of one veli of land in the next year. It is not clear why there was an interval of 14 years between the gift and its recording on stone. The record mentions Kulottunga Chola Deva performed took Madurai, Ilam (and Karuvur) and the crowned head of the Pandya, and performed the anointment (of heroes and victors).⁴⁰

The tenth damaged and undated inscription of Tribhuvanaviradeva who is identified with Kulottunga Chola III found on the same wall of the Panchanadesvara temple refers a gift made by the maha-sabha of suttamali-chaturvedimangalam, an agaram of Peravurnadu in Jayangondasolavalanadu, of some pieces of land as *thirunamatukkani* and also as urkkil-iraiyili to the temple of Tiruvaiyarudaiyar built by

Pillai Karanai Vilupparaiyar. This record also mentions the historical beginning of the same expressions of the king's exploits. The date portion devadasi, Tuesday, Mrigasira, is all that can be read. From this it is surmise that the construction of temple of Tiruvaiyarudaiyar built by Pillai Karanai- Vilupparaiyar.⁴¹

Rajaraja III Chola (1216-1256 CE)

Rajaraja III Chola ascended the throne in 1216 CE. In the record of the fifth year of reign in Vazhuvur the construction of the shrine of the goddess Tirupalliyarai Aludaiya Nachiyar is recorded with Tirukkarrali which literally means the sacred stone structure in the northwestern corner of the temple by Ekavasakan Ulagukanvidutta Perumal alias Vanakovaraiyar, also known as Chief Vanakovaraiyar of Tundanadu in Mudikondasola-valanadu.⁴² It is known as Kulottungachola Vanakovarayar. He was a descendant of the Vanar or Bana clan and immediate successor to the prominent chieftain Bana Ponparappinan alias Magadaipperumal.⁴³ He had many titles such as Ekavasagan,⁴⁴ Tayilumnallan,⁴⁵ Tundanadudaiyan,⁴⁶ Ulagukanvidutta Perumal,⁴⁷ Ulagangatta Vanakovaraiyar,⁴⁸ Tirunirruviramagadacholan and Tayilumnallaperumal⁴⁹. He should have been a very important chieftain during the reign of Kulottungachola III, as his inscriptions are found throughout the kingdom of Kulottungachola III. There are two inscriptions of Rajaraja III Chola issued in his 14 and 31st regnal years in this temple.

An inscription of Rajaraja III issued in his 14th regnal year 1229 A. D found one of the shrines on the northern side in the Mayuranathaswami temple registers an endowment of 500 *kuli* of land named Anjolan-vilagam for rice offering to the goddess Tiruppalliyarai Nachchiyar during the early morning service in the temple, by Araiyan Tiruvegambam Udaiyan of Porosaikkudi in Uyyakkondar-valanadu, who had also blessed the Goddess. After offerings the rice was to be distributed among the members

of the temple establishment. During the service the name of the donor was to be announced in the words “Porosaikkudaiyan-Tambiran has come”.⁵⁰

The second inscription of Rajaraja III issued in his 31st regnal year 1245-46 A.D found on the south wall of the first prakara in the Mayuranathasvami temple registers a gift of 2000 *kasu* deposited with the Sthanattar of the temple of Tirumayiladuturai-Udaiyar in Tiruvelundur Nadu to meet the expenses of daily worship, bath, apparel and offerings to the image of the goddess Bhuvanapati-Nachchiar consecrated (by the donor) in the tirunadai-maligai (circuit) of the temple by Ambalankoyil-kondan Arrapodaikkudavinan of sambangudi.⁵¹

Rajendra III Chola (1246-1279 CE)

Rajendra III Chola was the last ruler of the Chola Empire. As usual, the *prasasti* of his inscription instigates with a shorter form "Bumiyum tiruvum". There is no inscription of his period available in the Mayuranathar temple. After Rajendrachola III, the Chola Kingdom had virtually no strong rulers, and naturally the Pandyas of Madurai easily extended their rule to the entire Tamil kingdom. This reign was also ruled by the rulers of the Second Pandyan Empire in the 13th century CE. The Pandya inscription from this region testifies to their hegemony in the Mayiladuthurai region.

The region under the Pandyas

Here it is interesting to know the region under the Pandya period. After the fall of the Chola dynasty, the Pandyas of the Second Empire regained their supremacy in Tamilnadu. Maravarman Sundara Pandya I (1216-1244 CE) invaded the Chola territory and defeated Rajarajachola III (1216-1256 CE).⁵² In 1250 CE the great warrior king Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1250-1284 CE) who became the king of Pandyan, captured the Chola Territory after defeating Rajendrachola III (1246-1279 CE) who was made a vassal of King Pandya. The Chola country came under the control of the Pandyas and was forced to accept their supremacy.⁵³ With this great victory at

Tiruchirappalli, the districts of Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, and the countries of Cuddalore, Kerala, and Kongu came under his rule.⁵⁴ Part of the Pandya inscription belonging to Maravarman Sundara Pandya (1216-1244 CE), Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1277-1294 CE), Maravarman Vikrama Pandya (1281-1289 CE), Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (Sundara Pandya IV, 1304-1319 CE), Srivallabhadeva (1308-44 CE), Perumal Kulasekharadeva (1314-1362 CE) and Perumal Vira Pandya (1334-1374 CE) have been found in Muvalur, Thirukolambiyur, Thirumananjeri, Kilaiyur, Vazhuvur, Komal, Kadalangudi, etc.

Konerimeikondan

There are two inscriptions of Konerimeikondan issued in his 30 and 31st regnal years in this temple. An undated inscription of Konerimeikondan found on the same wall of the Panchanadesvara temple registers the royal order conveyed through the *Tirumandira Olai* Rajanarayana-Muvendavelan to the ruling classes of Tiruvaiyaruudaiyar temple granting certain lands tax-free at Nallattukkudi which were to be merged with the *devadana* village Kulottungacholan-Kurralam in the *ulvari* accounts from the 30th year of the King.⁵⁵

The second inscription of Konerimeikondan in his 31st regnal year found on the same wall of the Panchanadesvara temple registers royal order issued to the authorities of the temple of Tiruvaiyaru-udaiyar at Kulottungasolan-Kurralam in Tiruvalundar-nadu a division of Jayan-gondasola-valanadu naming the tax free grant mentioned in No. 374 above, viz. 41/4 veli and odd of garden land at Virarajendra-chaturvedimangalam yielding an annual rent of 60 kulam of paddy per veli, and 61/2 kasu in addition by way of income from the areca-nut palms for the requirements of daily worship etc., to the deity, as an equivalent of 200 kalam of paddy per year which had been presented by the King in his 29th year.⁵⁶

The region under Vijayanagara Rulers

Here it is worthwhile to know the region under the Vijayanagara period. After the decay of the Later Cholas and Pandyas in the second half of the 13th century CE, the minor dynasties raised their heads. Sambuvarayas in the north and Madurai as the capital became independent. The Sultan's rule in Madurai ended with Ala-ud-din Sikandarsha (1371-1378 CE) due to the rise of the Vijayanagara ruler who was founded on the bank of the Tungabhadra River. The Kings of Vijayanagara ruled until the 16th century. They controlled all of southern India.

The region under the Nayaks of Thanjavur

Here it is highly useful to know the region under the Nayaks of Thanjavur. The Thanjavur Nayaks ruled from Thanjavur and controlled this area after Krishnadevaraya (1509-1529 CE), the famous Vijayanagara Emperor, who was secured by a porter named Timmappa Nayaka, his son Sevvappa Nayaka (1532-1560 CE). The Thanjavur Nayakship was founded when this Sevvappa Nayaka obtained Thanjavur as a dowry that his wife brought with her. Sevvappa, who came to power in 1532 CE, was succeeded by his son Achyuthappa Nayaka, who ruled until 1600 CE. There is no information about the activities of these kings in the Mayiladuthurai region. But Govinda Dikshithar, his minister, erected the Pushya Mandapa with steps leading to the Cauvery at Mayiladuhturai.⁵⁷ Achyuthappa Nayaka was succeeded by his son Ragunatha Nayak (1600-1634 CE). During his time, Govinda Dikshithar, an orthodox brahmana minister, performed numerous sacrifices. He made great gifts and benefits on the occasion of the sacrifice. Mahadana Street in the city of Mayiladuthurai was gifted by him to the Brahmins on such occasions.⁵⁸ Nothing is known about the successor to Ragunatha Nayaka through the Mayiladuthurai region which was under the rule of the Thanjavur Nayaks.

The region under the Marathas of Thanjavur

Here it is interesting to know the region under the Marathas of Thanjavur. The Maratha government in Thanjavur was inaugurated by Venkoji alias Ekoji (1676-1684 CE), Shivaji's brother. Venkoji was the son of Shahji and Thukkabai, his second wife. Venkoji was in power in Thanjavur from 1684-1711 CE; Serfoji I (1711-1729 CE) and Tukkoji (1729-1738 CE). These three sons came to power one after another in order of seniority. One of the notable events of Shahji I was that Appaya Dikshitha or Appadhvarin of Mayialduthurai went to Thanjavur in 1696 CE to attend the Yegna (Yaga) performed by Trambamathya Dikshitha, the then minister in Thanjavur. After the sacrificial ceremonies were over, the king detained Appaya Dikshitha in Thanjavur for about three months, to hear him recite the Mahabharata in his apartment after three months; the king asked him to write a Compilation on the law, religion and customs of the country. Consequently, he started the Acharanavanitha in 1696 CE and together with his son completed it after a span of eight years in 1700 CE. There were no other extraordinary events in Mayiladuthurai until Tuljaji's accession to the throne.

Unknown Inscriptions

An undated unknown inscription found on the same wall in the Panchanadesvara temple registers the actual *ulvari* of the grant declared in No. 378 above as lastly entered in the revenue register of (tax-free) lands, with the verification of several *ulavari* and *puravari* officers.⁵⁹

END NOTES

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